

## **Inclusion of Issues of Diversity into Primary School Curriculum Experiences: Appraisal of Teachers' attitudes and Practices**

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**Abstract:** The major intent of the study was to examine the attitudes teachers hold and their practices as far as inclusion of two issues of diversity (ethnicity and gender) into primary school curriculum experiences is concerned. Data was collected from 160 teachers and 180 students in 10 first-cycle primary schools in Addis Ababa City. Questionnaire was used to collect the data. Where quantitative-inferential tools were mainly used for data analysis, qualitative descriptions were also employed. The result indicated that though most teachers hold generally desirable attitude towards inclusion of ethnic and gender issues into primary school curriculum experiences, the most positive support was noted from teachers who belong to those social groups (on ethnicity and gender) that claim to have been disadvantaged in the past political (social) landscape of the country. Teachers who speak other local languages besides the official language (Amharic) showed superior support for inclusion of ethnic issues to those who speak Amharic only. A similar trend has been noted as far as teachers' practices with regard to inclusion of the two issues of diversity are concerned. The implications of this situation for schools' teacher development policies and practices have been discussed.

### **Introduction**

In countries with diversified population, response to diversity of social groups is one of the essential issues that have far reaching implications. According to Stevens and Wood (1995) two general views of differences are perceptible: a) difference as a problem and b) difference as strength, as an expression of life. When difference is viewed as a problem people tend to ignore that it exists or they make use of all possible means so that the 'minorities' accept the attributes of a 'mainstream' group as their own. This is a mono-cultural (or 'assimilationist') perspective which often strives to

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build social harmony around a single attribute (e.g. culture, language and religion). A competing response which is based on a genuine respect and appreciation of differences is the multicultural one. It is based on the conviction that real harmony is that which comes out of mutual understanding, mutual respect and 'balanced social contract.' This represents what Banks (1997) writes as *unum e pluribus* – in many one. The history of modern Ethiopia tends to be characterized by fear of the diversity of its population; where diversity is considered as a threat to national unity and social cohesion. Hence, according to many writers (e.g., Levine, 1965; Hamesso, 1997; Alemseged, 2004), the nation building project in Ethiopia took one language, religion and culture as a unifying tool. In fact, this had been tried in many countries of the world that are characterized by diverse population.

Some local studies seem to affirm that differences among social groups have not been positively received in Ethiopia. For instance, a study by Habtamu (1998) indicated that there have been times of intense conflicts among ethnic groups. A study by Meseret (1987) also revealed that females have been losers in the social arrangements. Tirussew (1999) noted that the disabled have always been under privileged in the history of the country. **Ambissa (April 2010) also indicated** that adulation of in-groups and derogation of out-groups, which has been the cause for many intense conflicts, is an observable phenomenon in Ethiopia.

Irrespective of this situation, some efforts have been there in the history of Ethiopia to address the concerns over issues of diversity. An instance worth mentioning here is the attempts made by the Communist regime (1974 - 1991). Among some of the steps the regime took were:

- the launching of the universal adult basic literacy in about 15 ethnic languages;
- the formation of Institute for Ethnic Studies;
- the beginning of broadcast in the languages of some ethnic groups; and

- the formation of Women's Associations with structure extending from the centre to local levels.

While such efforts are somewhat encouraging, analysts criticize that the efforts could not bring much difference in the situation of the so said disadvantaged groups (see, Galler cited in Hameso, 1997).

Following the 1994 Federal Constitution, Ethiopia saw a different move in its history as far as responses to the diversity of its population is concerned. Among the most observable changes following the Constitution have been administrative reorganization mainly based on ethno-linguistic criterion; mother tongue as medium of instruction in schools and local language as a medium for office services. The Education and Training Policy (TGE, 1994) provided the rights of ethnic groups to be educated in their own language, regionalization of the curriculum development process (at least at primary level), inculcating an awareness and acceptance of differences (See for instance sub-articles 2.2.12, 3.1.2, 3.1.3, 3.5, and 3.8 of the Education and Training Policy). Therefore, at least at policy level, the present day Ethiopia does not consider diversity as a problem or a threat to national cohesion. This perspective on diversity is expected to inform education practices of the school system of the country.

### **The Problem**

Where the current policy direction is multicultural in its assumptions and strategies and where education is considered to be an essential tool in promoting the new policy direction, there is no research to appraise whether or not what goes on in classrooms are responsive to such policy direction. Recently, Abebaw (2007), Tilahun (2007) and Girma (2008) attempted to look into the nature of intercultural interactions and the possible causes of inter-group conflicts along linguistic, religious, or any other marker of diversity in educational settings. However, apart from pinpointing some challenges to positive inter-group relations with their possible causes, such studies did not include the educational responses to the challenges. The

present study is planned to contribute to filling this gap by examining teachers' attitudes and practices towards inclusion of two issues of diversity (ethnicity and gender) into primary school curricular experiences. Among others, it is intended to find answers to the following basic questions:

- a. What is the attitude of primary school teachers of Addis Ababa City towards inclusion of ethnic and gender issues into school curriculum experiences?
- b. What are the practices of the teachers like regarding inclusion of ethnic and gender issues into school curriculum experiences?
- c. Do teachers attribute variables (sex, age, language spoken, ethnic origin, qualification, job experience and in-service training) have any statistically significant association with teachers' attitudes and practices regarding inclusion of ethnic and gender issues into school curriculum experiences?

### **Operational Definitions of Terms**

*Dominant*: a group that has or had the privilege of being visible in the public life and whose attributes were given pride of place as a 'unifying' force.

*Ethnic group*: represents what the 1994 Ethiopian Constitution defines as nations, nationalities and peoples.

*Ethnic-sensitive teaching strategies*: teaching strategies that are designed with due recognition of ethnic diversity. They are strategies meant to help learners get acquainted with such diversity.

*Gender-sensitive teaching strategies*: teaching strategies that are designed with due recognition of gender differences. They are strategies meant to help learners become aware of such differences.

## Review of Related Literature

In a multicultural society schools can serve the purpose of either maintaining the existing social disequilibrium (a controlling function) or the purpose of social transformation towards a desired level of social balance (the emancipatory function) or partly both (Ornstein and Hunkins, 2004). In practice, whether the functions of the schools incline to either of the extremities (controlling or emancipation) depends on several factors, at the centre of which is the mainstream thinking on what schools should stand for. Teachers play a significantly vital role in realizing the major functions schools serve. As Ornstein & Hunkins (2004, p. 25) write,

It is the experienced teacher who has a broad and deep understanding of teaching and learning, the needs and interests of students, and the content, methods, and materials that are realistic; therefore, it is the teacher ... who has the best chance of taking curriculum making out of the realm of theory or judgment and translating it into practice and utility.

That is why teachers are said to be makers of the operative curriculum. Similarly, explaining the decisive roles of teachers in educational change, Fullan (1991, p. 1) writes, "Educational change depends on what teachers do and think - it is as simple and complex as that." Singh and Nayak (1997, p. 32) note the following regarding the role of teachers in multicultural change of classrooms:

Unknowingly educators transmit biased messages to students. *Some biases have been internalized to such a degree that we do not realize that we are biased.* When teachers are able to recognize the subtle and unintentional bias in their behavior, positive change can be made in the classroom. (**Emphasis mine**)

Teachers engage in interpretive activity as they mediate between the official curriculum and the learners. Such interpretation cannot escape the influence of the teachers' identity and the influence imposed on them from the broader social environment. This often makes teachers' personal transformations difficult. As Yamba (1998, p. 3) states:

The fact remains that teachers are the products of the society in question: their attitudes on race and race relations are reflective of the predominant attitudes of the society; their views are formed by the dominant historical and contemporary power relations that influence interpersonal relations within the wider society; their frames of reference are therefore shaped by their peculiar identification with, and acceptance into their respective communities; and, their activities are constrained by the institutional structures within which their views can be expressed, interpreted, and acted upon. The combination of these factors complicates policy implementation.

Thus, the wider social world controls what goes on in the classroom through the teachers - affirming that schools are under the influence of power 'arrangement' outside the school compound. This calls for the need to focus on changing teachers' frame of mind if schools have to successfully accomplish their role of facilitating social transformation. As Nieto (1999, p.3) writes, "Unless and until teachers undergo a personal transformation, little will change in our schools." And, unless schools transform themselves, they are not expected to support social transformation.

There are several studies which looked into the association between teachers' characteristics and the attitudes they hold on multicultural change. For instance, Skuy and Vice (1996) conducted a survey study of the attitudes of teachers towards racially integrated schooling at certain previously segregated English-medium secondary schools in South Africa. According to the study, a significant but small majority of 59% generally supported the integrated approach. Age, qualification, and home languages

of teachers are related to their attitudes; and the most negative attitudes toward integration were demonstrated by teachers speaking Afrikaans (the language of the dominant group under apartheid regime). Similarly, a study by Gracia (2001) on attitudinal differences among elementary school teachers toward the use of native language found that teachers who speak other languages besides English and those who were bilingually trained had the most positive attitude. This study also found out that the more years a teacher taught the more his/her attitude became negative toward his/her students' native language. Another study by Yamba (1998) on the attitudes of teachers in 'Multicultural-Development-Unit-Schools' in Birmingham towards anti-racist multicultural education program indicated that teachers at first showed positive attitudes towards multicultural education program though it declined in the second survey. Females, less experienced, and inner city school teachers showed more desirable attitudes than males, more experienced and outer-city school teachers. The study also indicated that the application of anti-racist multicultural education improved home-school relationship.

These studies seemed to indicate that teachers' attributes such as sex, ethnic origin, and age have some relation to their attitudes towards multicultural inclusion. Other background characteristics such as previous exposure to diverse groups, ability of languages other than one's own and length of teaching experience were also found to have associations with teachers' attitudes towards multicultural inclusion.

### **Methods of the Study**

The major sources of data for the study were 160 teachers (52% females) who were randomly drawn from 10 selected primary schools in Addis Ababa city. The selection of the schools has been done in such a way that schools located in diversified neighborhoods (e.g., those around Shiro Meda, Gulele Areas, Merkato) are included. Therefore, purposive sampling has been used in the selection of the schools.

Questionnaire has been the major instrument for data collection. The teachers' questionnaire had three major parts. The first part contained 7 items which were used to collect data on the respondents' background characteristics/attributes. The second part included 27 items (14 related to ethnicity and the remaining 13 related to gender) which were intended to assess teachers' attitudes towards inclusion of issues of diversity into school curriculum experiences along a five point rating scale. The third part was meant to assess teachers' application of diversity-sensitive teaching strategies (DSTS). It contained 21 items (11 related to ethnicity and 10 related to gender) designed in a checklist format. The final version of the teachers' questionnaire had 12 negatively worded statements to check any contradictory response. The questionnaire was prepared in Amharic for ease of understanding. For pilot testing, the teachers' questionnaire was distributed twice in three weeks to 15 teachers taken from a primary school (located in the West outskirts of Addis Ababa city). The result indicated a test-retest reliability of 0.86. This level of reliability was taken as acceptable. The response rate for the teachers' questionnaire was 95.63%.

Questionnaire was also used to get additional data from 180 grade four students particularly on the teachers' application of diversity-sensitive teaching strategies (DSTS). The questionnaire was designed in a checklist format. Grade four students were preferred because they are able to comprehend their experiences as far as inclusion of diversity of social groups is concerned compared to those in the lower grades. The questionnaire contained 11 items (5 related to ethnic-sensitive teaching strategies and 6 related to gender-sensitive teaching strategies). The questions were formulated in simple statements for easy comprehension. They were also translated into Amharic. The students' questionnaire was pilot tested at the same school before being put into final use and a test-retest reliability of 0.91 was found. During the data collection, a trained facilitator read out the items of the questionnaire to the students. The response rate was 100%.



## Result and Discussion

**a) Teachers' attitudes to Inclusion of Issues of Diversity into School Curriculum Experiences:** Twenty-seven items were used in the attitude scale (14 items related to ethnicity and 13 to gender). Among the items used to appraise teachers' attitudes towards inclusion of ethnic issues were:

- Schools role should be teaching a single national culture however diversified the students may be.
- As ethnic issue is more political than academic, schools should not bother about it.
- Sparing academic time to talking about different cultures in the country is unnecessary.
- Teachers should be blind to the cultural and linguistic differences among their students.
- All students would benefit from the inclusion of ethnic issues into school education.

Similarly, the items used to appraise teachers attitudes towards inclusion of gender issues included:

- Including gender issues into formal education rather exacerbates females' feeling of inferiority.
- Assertiveness training for girls should be part of formal education.
- Consciousness raising about sexism should be part of a school curriculum.
- Both males and females benefit from gender equity.
- Females' inferior school performance in some subjects should be seen only in terms of their biological inferiority.

**Table 1: Teachers attitude toward Inclusion of Issues of Diversity**

Attitude toward inclusion of	No	Mean	SD	Maximum score	Minimum score	T
Ethnic issues	154	3.27	0.92	4.92	1.38	4.38
Gender issues	154	3.73	0.91	4.71	1.50	

$$p < 0.05$$

As shown in Table 1, the mean-scores are marginally above the median point (i.e., 3 along the 5 points scale). This indicates that teachers seemed to have generally desirable attitude towards inclusion of issues of diversity into school curriculum. Nevertheless, the fact that the mean-scores are closer to the median point may indicate that there were teachers who felt discomfort with inclusion of the issues of diversity into school curriculum experiences. It is also shown that the mean score on attitudes towards inclusion of gender issues is greater than that of the attitudes towards inclusion of ethnic issues. And, the difference was found to be statistically significant ( $t = 4.38$ ,  $P < 0.05$ ). This result indicates that the respondents tended to have less support for inclusion of ethnic issues into school curriculum as compared to inclusion of gender issues. This could be because teachers may take ethnic issues to be politically more volatile and fear that talking about ethnic issues is dangerous. A response to one of the open-ended questions seemed to support the same. It reads, "*These days ethnic issues are politically sensitive and talking about that in classroom may be inviting problem to oneself. I have to concentrate on what is there in the textbooks. Ethnic issues have to be left to the politicians.*" Where this idea tended to have been shared by a few other respondents, it shows the teachers' lack of know-how regarding inclusion of such issues into the curricular experiences. Inclusion of ethnic issues into school curriculum does not necessarily involve talking about each and every ethnic group or blaming any. Hence, the fact that the teachers generally hold a positive perception on diversity-inclusive curriculum seems encouraging. Nonetheless, since the attitude scores are only marginally positive and that some teachers fear even talking about ethnic diversity (or diversity as a whole); there is a need to work more to ensure teachers'

support for multicultural inclusion of issues of diversity into school curriculum.

***b) Teachers' Characteristics and their Attitudes toward Inclusion of Issue of Diversity into Primary School Curriculum Experiences:***

Characteristic variables such as sex, age, language spoken, ethnic origin, qualification, job experience and in-service training were identified for examination of the associations they may have with the teachers' attitudes to inclusion of ethnic and gender issues into school curriculum. The result is presented in Table 2.

**Table 2: Teachers Characteristics and attitudes on Inclusion of Ethnic Issues**

Variable	N	Mean	SD	Test result
Sex				
▪ Male	73	3.34	0.90	t = 0.87
▪ Female	81	3.21	0.93	
Age:				F = 1.03
▪ 20 – 24	13	3.00	0.14	
▪ 25 – 29	8	3.76	0.86	
▪ 30 – 34	11	3.36	0.94	
▪ 35 – 39	13	3.44	0.91	
▪ ≥ 40	109	3.24	0.89	
Language Spoken:				t = 7.79*
▪ Amharic only	70	2.74	0.78	
▪ Amharic plus	84	3.72	0.77	
Ethnic group				F = 31.18*
▪ Amhara	88	2.85	0.86	
▪ Non-Amhara	57	3.89	0.55	
▪ FDP <sup>1</sup>	9	3.45	1.03	
Qualification:				F = 0.08
▪ 10+2	11	3.30	0.89	
▪ 12+1 (TTI)	132	3.26	0.93	
▪ 12+ Diploma	11	3.37	0.78	
Teaching experience:				F = 3.39*
▪ 1-5 years	16	3.09	1.06	
▪ 6-10 years	8	3.56	1.19	
▪ 11-15 years	8	3.43	0.71	
▪ 16-20 years	15	4.00	0.54	
▪ Over 20 years	107	3.16	0.88	
Relevant in-service training:				t = 1.10
▪ Received	20	3.06	0.87	
▪ Not received	134	3.31	0.92	

\* $P < 0.05$ 

<sup>1</sup> FDP- represents 'From Different Parents', a situation where either the mother or the father belongs to the Amhara ethnic group.

The data presented here reveals that language spoken by the teachers; their ethnic origin and teaching experiences were found to be significantly associated with the teachers' attitudes towards inclusion of ethnic issues into school curriculum experiences. Accordingly, higher attitude mean score was observed from teachers who speak other local languages besides Amharic; a difference which is statistically significant ( $t = 7.79, P < 0.05$ ). Thus, teachers who speak other local languages besides Amharic had more desirable attitude towards inclusion of ethnic issues into school curriculum experiences than those who speak Amharic only. This finding happens to match findings reported by Banks and others, which indicated that exposure to different cultures helps the subjects develop more desirable attitudes towards issues of diversity (National Council for Social Studies, 1976). It is true that language is a means to get exposed to culture. As those who speak other local languages besides Amharic had more exposure to different cultures they might have developed desirable attitudes that support inclusion of ethnic issues into school curriculum. A related study mentioned earlier (Gracia, 2001) showed that teachers who speak other languages besides the mainstream language showed more positive attitude toward the use of native language in school. The study, though not exactly similar to the issue being discussed here, may indicate that exposure to different languages or being from minority language group is positively associated with attitude towards inclusion of diversity into school curriculum. Thus, the present finding may justify the need for multilingual approach in education.

As far as ethnic background is concerned non-Amhara respondents showed superior attitude mean score on inclusion of ethnic issues into school experiences. The observed mean differences were statistically significant [ $F_{(2, 151)} = 31.18, p < 0.01$ ]. A post hoc comparison indicated that the differences were significant between Amhara and non-Amhara; non-Amhara and those from different parents as well as between Amhara and those from different parents. Therefore, it can be said that respondents whose ethnic origin is non-Amhara had the most desirable attitude towards inclusion of ethnic issues followed by those from different parents. Ethnic Amhara showed the least desirable attitude. In the current political landscape of

Ethiopia, ethnic non-Amhara claim a century of marginalization of their languages and culture. Hence, it is not surprising if they show superior support for inclusion of ethnic issues into school curriculum experiences. This result coincides with the finding reported by Hendrick (1988), which indicated that minorities showed a stronger support for multiculturalism in school education than members of those who do not feel marginalized.

Regarding teaching experience, the least attitude mean-score was observed from beginning teachers (those with 1-5 years of teaching experience) while the highest attitude mean-score was observed from those with 16-20 years of teaching experience. The observed differences were statistically significant [ $F_{(4, 149)} = 3.39, p < 0.05$ ]. A post hoc comparison was performed and the differences were significant among all the groups except between the groups that had 1-5 years of job experience and those that had more than 20 years of job experience. There were also significant differences between those who had 6-10 years of job experience and those that had 11-15 years of job experience. Hence, teachers with mid-year experience (11-15 years and 16-20 years) showed more desirable attitude than those who are most experienced (more than 20 years) and the beginning teachers (1 to 5 years of service). This finding is dissimilar to the findings of studies reviewed earlier (Yamba, 1998; Gracia, 2001), which showed that experience is inversely related to attitude towards multiculturalism in education. Here a pattern is not evident regarding the influence of job experience on teachers' attitudes towards inclusion of ethnic issues into school curriculum. Such absence of pattern may be due to a factor not identified in the present study, and which, nevertheless, is associated with job experience. This deserves further investigation.

In general, therefore, it seems possible to conclude from this finding that attitude towards inclusion of ethnic issue into school curriculum is influenced most by exposure to more local language and the ethnic origin of the respondents.

**Table 3: Teachers Characteristics of and attitude to Inclusion of Gender Issues**

Variable	N	Mean	SD	Test result
Sex				
▪ Male	73	3.34	1.00	t = 8.83*
▪ Female	81	4.24	0.39	
Age:				F = 1.49
▪ 20 – 24	13	4.08	0.79	
▪ 25 – 29	8	3.60	1.08	
▪ 30 – 34	11	3.20	1.16	
▪ 35 – 39	13	3.71	0.91	
▪ ≥ 40	109	3.76	0.88	
Language Spoken:				t = 0.92
▪ Amharic only	70	3.81	0.89	
▪ Amharic plus	84	3.68	0.93	
Ethnic group				t = 0.31
▪ Amhara	88	3.78	0.88	
▪ Non-Amhara	57	3.66	0.97	
▪ FDP	9	3.76	0.91	
Qualification:				F = 0.99
▪ 10+2	11	3.62	1.00	
▪ 12+1 (TTI)	132	3.78	0.90	
▪ 12+ Diploma	11	3.39	0.97	
Teaching experience:				F = 2.30
▪ 1-5 years	16	3.99	0.88	
▪ 6-10 years	8	3.28	1.00	
▪ 11-15 years	8	3.33	1.25	
▪ 16-20 years	15	3.32	1.02	
▪ Over 20 years	107	3.82	0.84	
Relevant in-service training:				t = 1.03
▪ Received	20	3.84	0.93	
▪ Not received	134	3.68	0.90	

\*P &lt; 0.05

Except sex of the respondents, all the other variables that were suspected to have some association with teachers' attitudes towards inclusion of gender issues into school curriculum experiences had no statistically significant association. Female respondents showed superior support for inclusion of gender issues into school curriculum experiences compared to males.

Females are marginalized in Ethiopian society, irrespective of their ethnic origin, social class, or any other marker of diversity. As marginal groups, they are expected to have the aspiration to see their attributes fairly included into the education, similar to the situation discussed in relation to ethnic groups. Therefore, the present finding is not surprising. It rather indicates that attempts to be made to improve the attitude of teachers towards inclusion of gender issues into school curriculum should pay special attention to males' receptivity. The present female-focused workshops, seminars and forums in Ethiopia may not serve much unless equal focus is paid to ways male teachers in participate in and get sensitized to gender issues.

A related concern raised at this point was whether the interaction of the teachers' sex and ethnic identities influence the attitudes the teachers hold regarding inclusion of issues of diversity into school curriculum. Table 4 is used to present the result.

**Table 4: Teachers Gender versus Ethnic Origin and their Attitudes towards Inclusion of Issues of Diversity into School Curriculum Experiences**

Subgroup (sex & ethnic group )	No	Attitude toward inclusion of:					
		Ethnic issues			Gender issues		
		Mean	SD	F	Mean	SD	F
Male-Amhara	34	2.93	0.89	10.79*	3.13	1.02	15.36*
Female-Amhara	53	2.92	0.85		4.19	0.43	
Male-non-Amhara	33	3.71	0.73		3.20	1.02	
Female-non-Amhara	25	4.04	0.36		4.30	0.35	
Male from different parents	6	3.60	0.91		3.46	0.91	
Female from different parents	3	3.57	1.50		4.36	0.28	

$P < 0.01$



A difference has been observed in the attitude mean scores of the various groups and the difference is statistically significant for both inclusion of ethnic issues [ $F_{(5, 148)} = 10.79, p < 0.01$ ] and gender issues [ $F_{(5, 148)} = 15.36, p < 0.01$ ]. Regarding attitudes towards inclusion of ethnic issues a post hoc comparison (using t-test) indicated that the differences were statistically significant between male-Amhara and all the other sub-groups; female-Amhara and all the other sub-groups; male-non-Amhara and female-non-Amhara as well as female-non-Amhara and male-FDP. Hence, based on the mean score it can be noted that female-non-Amhara showed the most desirable attitude toward inclusion of ethnic issues into school curriculum than all the other subgroups followed by male-non-Amhara. Male- and female-Amhara showed the least desirable attitude toward inclusion of ethnic issues into school curriculum. Thus, it can be noted that ethnic background of the respondents' exerted a very important influence on their attitude toward inclusion of ethnic issues into school curriculum.

As far as attitude towards inclusion of gender issues into school curriculum experiences is concerned, a post hoc comparison shows that the differences between male-Amhara and female-Amhara, female-non-Amhara, male-FDP and female FDP were statistically significant. The differences between female-Amhara and male-non-Amhara; female-non-Amhara, and male-FDP were also statistically significant. Male non-Amharas significantly differed from both female-non-Amharas and female-FDP. Statistically significant differences were observed between female-non-Amhara and male-FDP as well as male-FDP and female-FDP. Therefore, it can be noted that females of all ethnic background generally showed more desirable attitude toward inclusion of gender issues into school curriculum than their male counterparts. The highest attitude mean-score was, of course, observed from female-non-Amharas and female-FDP followed by female-Amharas. The least attitude mean-score was observed from male-Amhara that significantly differed from all others except male-non-Amharas. Hence, it can be noted again that sex exerted a very important influence on the attitudes of the teachers toward inclusion of gender issues.

The findings are explainable in terms of Gardner and others (1982) idea of looking at differences within similarities. Hence, the finding warns us against merging all females or ethnic others together as though they were perfectly similar. We need to consider multiple identities within each group and sub-group. This means, for instance, in thinking about gender representation in curriculum materials there is a need to ask which female is represented. A similar care needs to be taken in diversity-sensitizing in-service training programs.

When one looks at the effects of the variables identified in general, age, qualification and in-service training were found to have no statistically significant association with the teachers' attitudes towards inclusion of issues of diversity into school curriculum. Such findings are dissimilar to works reported by some researchers. For instance, Yamba (1998) and Gracia (2001) reported that age and in-service training were significantly associated with teachers' attitudes toward multicultural education. Qualification seemed to have no significant effect on teachers' attitudes in the present study. This may be because all the teachers in this study had the desirable qualification as per the standard set by the Federal Ministry of Education.

*c) Teachers' application of diversity-sensitive teaching strategies*

The teaching strategies teachers apply greatly determine whether or not curricular activities address diversity. Based on this, specific teaching strategies sensitive to each of the two aspects of diversity (ethnicity and gender) were presented to the teachers to see whether or not they applied them. Twenty-one items (11 related to ethnicity and 10 related to gender) were used for this purpose. The result is as presented in Table 5.

**Table 5: The Teachers' Application of Ethnic- and Gender-sensitive Teaching Strategies: Teachers' Self-reports**

Application of:	No	Mean <sup>c</sup>	SD	Maximum score	Minimum score	t
ESTS <sup>a</sup>	154	3.88	3.37	8	0	3.66*
GSTS <sup>b</sup>	154	5.17	2.46	9	4	

\*P &lt; 0.05

<sup>a</sup>Ethnic-sensitive teaching strategies<sup>b</sup>Gender-sensitive teaching strategies<sup>c</sup>The maximum possible score is 11 for application of ESTS and 10 for application of GSTS

The result in Table 5 discloses that the application mean-score regarding ethnic-sensitive teaching strategies is far below the average (i.e., 3.88 out of 11 points). The application mean-score for gender-sensitive teaching strategies is marginally above average (i.e., 5.17 out of 10). This means, on average the teachers applied only about one-third of the ethnic-sensitive teaching strategies and about half of the gender-sensitive teaching strategies specified. The difference between application of ethnic-sensitive teaching strategies and gender-sensitive teaching strategies is statistically significant ( $t = 3.66$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). This indicates that the teachers applied gender-sensitive teaching strategies more than ethnic-sensitive teaching strategies, a result which corresponds to their attitudes towards inclusion of ethnic and gender issues into school curriculum experiences (Table 1). The result from the students' questionnaire supports this finding (Table 6).

**Table 6: Teachers' Application of Ethnic- and Gender-sensitive Teaching Strategies: Students' Report**

Application of:	No	Mean**	SD	Maximum score	Minimum score	t
ESTS	180	1.47	1.21	4	1	20.01*
GSTS	180	3.86	1.21	5	1	

\* $p < 0.01$ 

\*\*The maximum possible score is 5 on the application of ESTS and 6 on the application of GSTS.

According to Table 6, the students indicated that their teachers applied less than one-third (i.e., 1.47 out of 5 points) of the ethnic-sensitive teaching strategies (ESTS) and about two-third (i.e., 3.86 out of 6 points) of the gender-sensitive teaching strategies (GSTS) specified. Thus, the result is still in favor of GSTS; a difference which is statistically significant ( $t = 20.01$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Even though students seemed to have rated teachers' application of GSTS a bit higher than the teachers' self-rating, the results (in Table 5 and 6) generally show a similar trend.

Despite the fact that this finding is based on responses of teachers and students (not actual classroom observation), it may indicate the less attention teachers gave to issues of diversity, and more particularly, to ethnic issues in their teaching. Among the ethnic-sensitive teaching strategies the teachers were asked are whether or not the teaching strategies they applied included the conscious use of:

- examples from the different ethno-cultural groups;
- resource persons from the different ethnic group;
- classroom dialogue on issues related to ethnicity;
- activities and assignments that help children experience the ethno-cultural diversity of the country/their area; and
- activities that help the children realize the interdependence of humanity.

Each of these specific teaching strategies can be practiced in the classroom situation of Addis Ababa. Thus, the reason why teachers did not pay attention to them is a question worth answering. One possible reason may be the tendency to be silent regarding ethnic issues. As noted earlier, there is a tendency to shy away from ethnic discussion due to the political condition, which for long had regarded discussions relating to ethnic differences as destructive (Assefa, 1995). In the current policy in Ethiopia, ethnicity should be a concern for Ethiopian classrooms and ethnic-sensitive teaching strategies need to be applied. One cannot expect the reduction of inter-ethnic prejudice and misunderstanding which children tend to pick up from anywhere in their surroundings.

d) *Teachers' characteristics and application of diversity-sensitive teaching strategies*

This sub-section was devoted to examining whether or not teachers' application of diversity-sensitive teaching strategies had association with their characteristics (such as gender, age, language spoken, ethnic origin, qualification, job experience and the in-service training they received).

**Table 7: Teachers Characteristics and Application of ESTS**

Variable	N	Mean	SD	Test result
Sex				
▪ Male	73	0.30	3.41	t = 1.49
▪ Female	81	3.49	3.30	
Age:				F = 0.54
▪ 20 – 24	13	2.29	2.87	
▪ 25 – 29	8	4.13	3.87	
▪ 30 – 34	11	4.82	3.52	
▪ 35 – 39	13	4.31	3.04	
▪ ≥ 40	109	3.83	3.43	
Language Spoken:				t = 7.55*
▪ Amharic only	70	1.96	1.97	
▪ Amharic plus	84	5.48	3.46	
Ethnic group				F = 44.51*
▪ Amhara	88	2.13	2.25	
▪ Non-Amhara	57	6.39	3.25	
▪ FDP	9	5.11	2.71	
Qualification:				F = 1.98
▪ 10+2	11	3.18	3.31	
▪ 12+1 (TTI)	132	3.78	3.37	
▪ 12+ Diploma	11	5.73	3.04	
Teaching experience:				F = 2.66*
▪ 1-5 years	16	3.25	3.04	
▪ 6-10 years	8	4.88	4.09	
▪ 11-15 years	8	3.75	3.54	
▪ 16-20 years	15	6.33	3.13	
▪ Over 20 years	107	3.56	3.27	
Relevant in-service training:				t = 0.39
▪ Received	20	3.60	3.08	
▪ Not received	134	3.92	3.41	

\* $P < 0.05$

As shown in Table 7, the same variables that were found to be associated with the teachers' attitudes towards inclusion of ethnic issues into school curriculum experiences (i.e., language spoken, ethnic origin and teaching experience) happened to be associated with their application of ethnic-sensitive strategies, showing the strength of these variables in influencing teachers' attitudes to and practices of inclusion of issues of diversity into school curriculum experiences. Accordingly, it was found that speakers of other local language(s) besides Amharic applied ethnic-sensitive teaching strategies (ESTS) better than those who speak only Amharic, a difference which is statistically significant [ $t_{(152)} = 7.55, p < 0.01$ ]. This, as discussed above, is what is normally expected because speakers of different local languages have better exposure to different local cultures than those who speak only one local language. Such exposure helps them know what it means to be ethnically diversified. Thus, they tend to have the interest and disposition to apply relevant teaching strategies.

Ethnic non-Amhara reported to have applied ESTS much better than ethnic Amhara, a statistically significant difference [ $F_{(2, 152)} = 44.51, p < 0.01$ ]. A post hoc comparison indicated that the differences were significant between Amhara and non-Amhara; between non-Amhara and those from different parents, as well as between Amhara and those from different parents. Therefore, ethnic non-Amhara applied ethnic-sensitive teaching strategies better than ethnic Amhara and those from different parents. Respondents whose ethnic origin is from different parents applied ethnic-sensitive teaching strategies better than ethnic Amhara.

The least application mean-score on ethnic-sensitive teaching strategies was observed from those with 1-5 years of teaching experience and the highest mean-score from teachers with 16-20 years of teaching experience. The observed mean difference was statistically significant regarding the application of ethnic-sensitive teaching strategies [ $F_{(4, 149)} = 2.66, p < 0.05$ ]. The post hoc comparison indicated that the differences were statistically significant between those who had 16-20 years of job experience and all others; between those who had 1-5 years and 6-10 years of job experience as well as between those who had job experience of 6-10 and those who served for over 20 years. Thus, it may be noted that teachers who had job

experience of 16-20 years applied ethnic-sensitive teaching strategies more than the others followed by those with 6-10 years of job experience. Beginning teachers (i.e., those with 1-5 years of job experience) showed the least application of ethnic-sensitive teaching strategies. In general, dissimilar to what is normally expected, a pattern is not detectable from the present finding as far as the association between job experience and application of diversity-sensitive teaching strategies is concerned. This could be because of other variables associated with teaching experience.

**Table 8: Teachers Characteristic and Application of GSTS**

Variable	N	Mean	SD	Test result
Sex				
▪ Male	73	3.75	2.28	t = 7.67*
▪ Female	81	6.35	1.91	
Age:				F = 0.79
▪ 20 – 24	13	4.31	2.53	
▪ 25 – 29	8	4.13	2.85	
▪ 30 – 34	11	5.36	2.38	
▪ 35 – 39	13	5.23	2.31	
▪ > 40	109	5.25	2.45	
Language Spoken:				t = 0.58
▪ Amharic only	70	5.24	2.60	
▪ Amharic plus	84	5.01	2.35	
Ethnic group				F = 0.63
▪ Amhara	88	5.25	2.50	
▪ Non-Amhara	57	4.84	2.40	
▪ FDP	9	5.56	2.51	
Qualification:				F = 0.02
▪ 10+2	11	5.00	2.28	
▪ 12+1 (TTI)	132	5.12	2.52	
▪ 12+ Diploma	11	5.18	1.99	
Teaching experience:				F = 1.59
▪ 1-5 years	16	4.38	2.80	
▪ 6-10 years	8	3.75	2.43	
▪ 11-15 years	8	6.00	1.60	
▪ 16-20 years	15	4.67	2.89	
▪ Over 20 years	107	5.33	2.36	
Relevant in-service training:				t = 0.93
▪ Received	20	4.88	2.31	
▪ Not received	134	5.26	2.54	

\* $P < 0.05$

As shown in Table 8, of all the variables identified it was only sex of the respondents which was found to have some association with the application of gender-sensitive teaching strategies (GSTS). Female teachers reported to have applied gender-sensitive teaching strategies better than male teachers [ $t_{(152)} = 7.67, p < 0.01$ ]. In the earlier discussion it was underlined that females showed more positive attitude than males regarding inclusion of gender issues into school curriculum. The fact that female-teachers applied gender-sensitive teaching strategies confirms expectation.

The association the teachers' sex and ethnic group together have with the teachers' application of DSTS has been examined. See Table 9.

**Table 9: Teacher Gender versus Ethnic Origin and Application of DSTS**

Subgroup (sex & ethnic group )	No	Application of DSTS					
		Application of ESTS			Application of GSTS		
		Mean	SD	<i>F</i>	Mean	SD	<i>F</i>
Male-Amhara	34	2.24	2.15	19.34*	3.5	2.48	12.63*
Female-Amhara	53	1.96	2.29		6.36	1.82	
Male-non-Amhara	33	6.30	3.43		3.94	2.06	
Female-non-Amhara	25	6.68	2.84		6.08	2.08	
Male from different parents	6	5	2.28		4.17	1.60	
Female from different parents	3	5.33	4.04		8.33	1.16	

$P < 0.01$

A difference has been observed in the application mean scores of the various groups and the difference is statistically significant for both the application of ESTS [ $F_{(5, 148)} = 19.34, p < 0.01$ ] and GSTS [ $F_{(5, 148)} = 12.63, p < 0.01$ ]. The post hoc comparison revealed that the differences between male-Amhara and all the remaining five sub-groups were statistically significant. Similarly, the differences between Female-Amhara and all other sub-groups were statistically significant. The differences between male-non-Amhara and female-non-Amhara as well as between male-non-Amhara and male-FDP were also statistically significant. Female-non-Amhara significantly differed from male-FDP in their application of ethnic-sensitive



teaching strategies. Hence, it can be noted that ethnic non-Amhara have generally applied ethnic-sensitive teaching strategies better than the Amhara and those FDP. And, female-non-Amhara showed superior application of ethnic-sensitive teaching strategies compared to females of all subgroups as well as their male counterparts. The lowest application of ethnic-sensitive teaching strategies was observed from female-Amhara followed by male-Amhara. A similar trend was noted when attitude toward inclusion of ethnic issues into school curriculum was examined.

As far as the application of gender-sensitive teaching strategies is concerned the post hoc comparison revealed that females of all subgroups have generally showed superior application compared to their male counterparts. The observed differences were statistically significant between male-Amhara and female-Amhara, female-non-Amhara and female-FDP. The differences between female-Amhara and all other subgroups were statistically significant. The differences between male-non-Amhara and female-non-Amhara and female-FDP were statistically significant. Similarly, statistically significant differences were observed between female-non-Amhara and male-FDP and female-non-Amhara and female-FDP as well as between male-FDP and female-FDP. Male-Amhara applied gender-sensitive teaching strategies least of all subgroups followed by male-non-Amhara. This is almost related to their attitudes towards inclusion of gender issues into school experiences.

Here again, it can be noted that the claim “disadvantagedness” seemed to be at the center of the extent to which teachers applied diversity-sensitive (ethnic- and gender-sensitive) teaching strategies. This is because female-non-Amhara (who had experienced marginalization due to gender and ethnic origin) seemed to have applied diversity-sensitive teaching strategies better than other subgroups. On the other hands, male-Amhara (who are said to have been advantaged in terms of both ethnic origin and gender) showed the least application compared to other subgroups. These findings imply that there could be some resistance from teachers who had been relatively advantaged from the mono-cultural order. Or it can also be argued that

teachers who belonged to the historically dominant group applied of diversity-sensitive teaching strategies to a small extent most likely because they mistrust differences. Hence, there is a need to consider diversity-sensitive teaching strategies in offering in-service training to teachers.

A pattern tends to be evident from the discussion of the results of the application of diversity-sensitive teaching strategies. That is, groups of teachers who showed more desirable attitudes toward inclusion of issues of diversity into school curriculum were more likely to apply diversity-sensitive teaching strategies than those that showed less desirable attitude. This may imply the need to work more on improving teachers' perception of multiculturalism.

### **Conclusion**

The present study disclosed that teachers generally hold a positive attitude towards inclusion of issues of diversity into school curriculum experiences. Nevertheless, some variations have been noted across the social groups as far as the strength of their attitudes and pedagogical practices are concerned. Teachers who have reported to belong to the historically dominant ethnic group seemed to have little support for inclusion of ethnic issues into school curriculum experiences compared to those who claim to have been disadvantaged in the past political landscape of the country. Similarly, male teachers showed little support for inclusion of gender issues into school curriculum compared to female teachers. Teachers who speak other local languages besides the official language (Amharic) showed superior support for inclusion of ethnic issues as compared to those who speak Amharic only. The same situation holds true in the teachers' application of diversity-sensitive teaching strategies. Teachers who have support for multicultural inclusion of issues of diversity are less likely to apply ethnic-sensitive teaching strategies. Female teachers applied gender-sensitive teaching strategies better than their male counter parts. The study also disclosed that teachers made more use of gender-sensitive teaching strategies compared to ethnic-sensitive teaching strategies. This was found

to be a result of the fact that teachers shied away from discussing ethnic issues in their classrooms. This may indicate a fear of the existence of ethnic differences or the feeling that discussion of ethnic issues could challenge positive group relationships or a feeling that it could be politically sensitive.

In general, it can be concluded that history (previous dominance of the ethnic group), exposure (familiarity with and ability to use other local languages) and the operation of power in the wider public (the cultural dominance of male over female) seem very important variables in influencing teachers' attitudes and practices regarding inclusion of issues of diversity into school curricular experiences. Therefore, the present study seemed to imply, among other things, the need to:

- Hold dialogue with teachers from all social or identity categories on inclusion of multicultural perspectives into curriculum experiences. The fact that most teachers support multicultural inclusion is an opportunity to be utilized in securing the success of such intervention so long as multiculturalism is taken as a preferred response to diversity in present day Ethiopia.
- Provide in-service training for teachers on inclusion of ethnic and gender issues into school curriculum experiences. Such programs have to be designed in such a way that they help teachers question their own pre-conceptions.
- Consider bilingual and/or multilingual approaches in educational provision whereby children may learn some more local languages besides the federal official language.

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